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Office of Aviation Safety - Eastern Region

Date: November 5, 2024
Subject: ERA25LA039, Record of Conversation/Interview
Contact: Jimmie H. Smith

Mr. Jimmie H. Smith was contacted by phone on November 4, 2024, at 0831 EST. He was called at [REDACTED]. He provided an e-mail address of [REDACTED].

He was advised by e-mail when sending this document for review that it will not be released to the public until the investigation is finished and when published, any personal identifiable information (PII) such as cell phone number, e-mail address, address, pilot certificate number, etc., will be redacted and not viewable in the released document.

He indicated that he has about 600 hours in that airplane, which is kept in hangar A46 at FMY.

He was asked to explain what occurred during the approach and landing?

He advised he was inbound to Page Field Airport (FMY), Fort Myers, Florida, from The Florida Keys Marathon International Airport (MTH), Marathon, Florida. He did not have a VFR flight plan or flight following. When he was 15 miles out from FMY he listened to the automated terminal information service and was informed that landing and departing aircraft were using runway 5. The wind was from 040°. He continued towards FMY and at 10 miles he contacted the FMY ATCT and advised he was 10 miles out inbound, full stop. He was told to continue for downwind to runway 13. He wondered in that moment why they were not using runway 5 but did not question the controller. While on the downwind leg of the airport traffic pattern for runway 13 he noted a disabled aircraft (Cessna 177RG) [REDACTED] that had landed gear-up on runway 5. He turned base and final legs of the airport traffic pattern but a King Air that was ahead did not clear the runway so he was instructed by the local controller to go-around. He performed a go-around then remained in the airport traffic pattern for runway 13. While on the final leg for runway 13 he had left aileron and rudder input to correct for the crosswind then touched down. After touchdown, the flight encountered a big "wind gust" which resulted in the airplane departing the runway onto grass where while travelling about 55 kts the left wing and main landing gear colliding with an airport sign. He then taxied onto a taxiway and stopped the airplane. While stopped he was met by the fire

truck that had responded to [REDACTED] and was advised to evacuate the airplane because of a fuel leak. Airport personnel but material out to prevent fuel from going onto the grass.

He further indicated that it felt like there was a tailwind as the groundspeed appeared faster than the indicated airspeed. He also said that, "I should not have tried to land it. I should have diverted to Venice Municipal Airport (VNC), Venice, Florida, and landed on runway 5."

NTSB Questions Continued –

Was there anything mechanically wrong with the airplane that caused the loss of control?
"No, [the airplane] was in perfect condition."

Did you relax aileron and rudder input after touchdown?

I did. When I touched down I had an almost quartering tailwind. When the wind gust occurred, he added aileron and rudder input to correct.

The call ended at 0857 EST.

The digest was e-mailed to him for review on November 5, 2024. He replied the same day at 1634 EST with, "Your draft is accurate Jimmie Smith." The FINAL digest was e-mailed to him on November 6, 2024.